



Northern  
Territory  
Government

# CHARTER OF RIGHTS

for children and young people  
in care in the Northern Territory





ALL CHILDREN  
AND ADULTS  
HAVE RIGHTS,  
NO MATTER  
WHERE THEY  
COME FROM, WHAT  
THEY LOOK LIKE OR  
WHAT LANGUAGE  
THEY SPEAK.



## WHAT ARE RIGHTS?

You may not have heard about rights before but they are things that every child should have or be able to do.

Having rights does not always mean that we get everything we want. Rights are about the things that we all need to keep us safe and to help us grow up strong and happy.

## WHAT IS THE CHARTER OF RIGHTS FOR CHILDREN IN OUT OF HOME CARE?

This Charter belongs to you and explains your rights as a child or young person living in out of home care. It tells you what you can expect from the people who look after you while you are in care.

We want to make sure you get the best care possible. Everyone who looks after you is expected to do their best to make sure you are safe and support your rights.

To write this Charter we spoke with children, young people and the adults that look after them when they are in out of home care. Their suggestions and words have been included in this booklet to help explain what rights are and what these mean in your life.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO

# BE HAPPY, PLAY AND HAVE FUN

**This means:**

- > You have the freedom to enjoy yourself
- > Doing things that make you happy
- > Being allowed to have fun
- > Being happy can make you feel good about yourself
- > Laughing, talking and sharing stories



YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO

# BE YOURSELF

## This means:

- > You don't have to be fake or pretend
- > It would be boring if we were all the same
- > You don't need to copy others
- > You don't have to hide the real you
- > You can enjoy being who you are



YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO

# FEEL SAFE AND BE PROTECTED

**This means:**

- > You should always feel safe
- > You never have to worry about not being safe, that's the adults' job
- > You know who to ask for help and have people you can call that care about you



YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO

# HAVE YOUR HEALTH LOOKED AFTER

**This means:**

- > You are taken to the doctor when you are sick
- > You have breakfast and healthy food provided for you
- > You will feel good about your health and body
- > Your teeth will be healthy
- > Your health will keep you strong and help you grow



YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO

# HAVE CONTACT WITH YOUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS

**This means:**

- > You know who your family are and your history
- > You have opportunities to see your family and your friends
- > You can stay connected to the people that are important to you







YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO

# STAY CONNECTED TO YOUR CULTURE, LANGUAGE AND RELIGION

## This means:

- > You have opportunities to learn about your culture
- > A record of your family is kept and who they all are
- > That you know enough about your culture to keep it strong and pass it on to the next generation



YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO  
**BE LISTENED TO  
AND SAY WHAT  
YOU THINK  
AND FEEL**

**This means:**

- > When you speak up, people will listen to you
- > You will be involved in important decisions that are about you
- > Your opinions and voice will be listened to in Court
- > You will have opportunities to talk to your Caseworker about your Care Plan
- > You can be proud and not scared to say your thoughts



YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO  
**BE TREATED  
FAIRLY**

**This means:**

- > You have the same chances as everyone else
- > You should not feel left out
- > You should feel equal and important
- > Telling someone when you are not being treated fairly

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO  
**BE RESPECTED**

- This means:**
- > You should feel respected and listened to
  - > You should feel valued
  - > Your opinions and views will be taken seriously





YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO

# PRIVACY

## This means:

- > You are allowed to have your own things and somewhere to keep them
- > People will respect your belongings, space and body
- > Information about you and your family is looked after and only shared with the people who need to know it

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO

# AN EDUCATION

**This means:**

- > Having the opportunity to learn
- > You will learn to read and write and develop the skills you need for your future
- > You can ask for help to get a job
- > You will get extra support to learn if you need help





YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO

# BE INVOLVED IN YOUR COMMUNITY

**This means:**

- > You can become involved and connected with your community
- > You can join a sports team, club or music group
- > Having the chance to meet people and make new friends
- > One day you could become a leader in your community

# RESPONSIBILITIES

**Rights come with responsibilities.**

We all have a responsibility to respect other people's rights. This includes the people who care for you, your brothers and sisters, friends, teachers or caseworker.

Responsibilities are what other people can expect from you and how you should behave towards other people.

Here is what some other children and young people have suggested as a way to behave:

"TREAT OTHERS THE WAY YOU WANT TO BE TREATED"

"RESPECT OTHERS"

"EVERYONE DESERVES FAIR TREATMENT"

"LET OTHER PEOPLE BE WHO THEY ARE AND DON'T MAKE FUN OF THEM"

"GO TO SCHOOL STRAIGHT AWAY EVERY DAY AND ALWAYS LISTEN"

"LOOK AFTER YOUR BODY"

"YOU NEED TO RESPECT YOUR ELDERS"

"RESPECT OTHER PEOPLE'S PROPERTY"

"LISTEN WHEN OTHER PEOPLE ARE SPEAKING"

"SOMETIMES YOU CAN'T ALWAYS HAVE WHAT YOU WANT BUT YOU CAN AT LEAST HAVE YOUR VOICE LISTENED TO"



## WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE IN OUT OF HOME CARE?

Children come into care for different reasons. You can be in care for different lengths of time – sometimes a short time and sometimes until you turn 18. Usually the Court decides how long you are in care and who is responsible for your care and decisions about you. You will be able to tell the Court what you think and they will be interested in what you have to say.

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) will be responsible for decisions about you and your care. You will have your own Caseworker who will talk to you about these decisions and let you know what is happening. If you have questions about these decisions or why you are in care, talk to your Caseworker. If you are not happy or have any worries about your care, you can tell your Caseworker.

## WHAT IS A CARE PLAN?

While you are in care, your Caseworker will talk to you about writing a care plan that is all about you. Your care plan will explain decisions about where you live, who you live with, where you go to school and how you keep in contact with family and friends. Once this is finished, your Caseworker will give you a copy of your care plan.

If you don't want to discuss things with your Caseworker, there are other people you can contact (details at the end of this booklet).



**IF YOU HAVE A PROBLEM, ARE NOT HAPPY WITH YOUR CARE OR DON'T THINK THAT YOUR RIGHTS ARE BEING MET THERE ARE A COUPLE OF THINGS YOU CAN DO.**

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Remember, it's ok to talk to someone about things you are worried about or to complain.

### **1. First, talk to your Carer or Caseworker**

Caseworker name

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Caseworker email

.....

Caseworker phone number

.....

DCF Office number

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### **2. Or you can contact someone else in DCF**

**By ringing** 1800 750 167

**By emailing** [DCFcomplaints@nt.gov.au](mailto:DCFcomplaints@nt.gov.au)

**By writing a letter to:**

Department of Children and Families  
Attention: Complaints Management Unit  
PO Box 40596  
Casuarina NT 0810

### **3. The Children's Commissioner**

In the Northern Territory there is a Children's Commissioner who looks after your rights and makes sure your voice is heard and included in decisions.

The Commissioner doesn't work for the Department of Children and Families and is separate from the Government.

The Commissioner checks that DCF is working according to the law and the right policy and procedures.

If you want to make a complaint and you have already tried Steps 1 and 2 you can call the Children's Commissioner.

**Phone 1800 259 256 on Monday to Friday between 8.30am – 4.30pm**

# USEFUL NUMBERS

## Police

131 444 or 000

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## Kids Helpline

[www.kidshelp.com.au](http://www.kidshelp.com.au)

1800 551 800 (If you ring this number it is free, whatever you talk about will be private and you don't have to say your name. You can ring this number any time in the day or night. The service is specifically for those aged 5 – 25.)

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## Northern Territory child protection

1800 700 250 (If you are worried or believe that a child or young person you know is being, or has been, abused or neglected).

## CREATE Foundation

[www.create.org.au](http://www.create.org.au)

1800 655 105 (freecall)  
8945 9993 (Darwin)  
8953 8358 (Alice Springs)

CREATE is an organisation that is run all over Australia. They work with and for children and young people in care. They talk to people like you in care to find out about your experience and then talk to the government to try and make the care system better.

Club CREATE is a club for all children and young people in care. Once you join, they will send you a newsletter and information about events that are happening.

## Lifeline

[www.lifeline.org.au](http://www.lifeline.org.au)

13 11 14 (provides 24 hour telephone counselling and support when facing a personal crisis)

Legal information [www.lawstuff.org.au](http://www.lawstuff.org.au) (information all about the legal rights of people under 18).

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## Suicide Call Back Service

[www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au](http://www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au)

1300 659 467 (free nationwide professional telephone and online counselling for anyone affected by suicide).

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## Head Space

[www.headspace.org.au](http://www.headspace.org.au)

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## Reach Out

[www.reachout.com](http://www.reachout.com)

